

KEY NOTES

NEWS FROM
THE PERDIDO KEY ASSOCIATION



February 2023

PKA Annual Membership Meeting February 25

Please plan to attend the PKA Annual Membership Meeting to be held from 10 AM until Noon on Saturday, February 25, 2023, at the Eden Condominium located at 16281 Perdido Key Drive. Both in person and Zoom participation are anticipated. Matt Posner, Director of the Pensacola & Perdido Bays Estuary Program, will be the featured speaker. The Estuary Program works toward “improving and maintaining the natural habitat and ecosystem of the bays, estuaries and watersheds of Pensacola and Perdido Bays.” PKA members should receive the mail-out package for the meeting shortly. Please RSVP if planning to attend but also send in the enclosed proxy to ensure there is a quorum for the meeting. The mailing also contains information on renewing your PKA membership for 2023 – we hope you will continue to join us as we work through the challenges to our area.

Perdido Incorporation Meeting

At least 300 people attended the January 23, 2023 “We are Perdido” community meeting on incorporation at Liberty Church on Blue Angel Parkway. Featured was Florida League of Cities Director of FLC University Lynn Tipton who provided detailed information on the process of incorporation, types of municipalities that could result, potential benefits and pitfalls, plus many other relevant topics. “We are Perdido” leader Steven Brendtro then gave a report on the status of their “Government Lite” Perdido incorporation process including its rapid timeline where a go-ahead from local state political leaders had already been granted and a feasibility study was in progress and expected to be submitted to the Florida legislature by September 1, 2023. Along the way will be community meetings of various sorts. If approved by the legislature and Florida governor in 2024, incorporation could be on the ballot for voters in the Perdido area in the November 2024 general election. To view the January 23 meeting on *YouTube*, go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8lisC1R5M5M>; for earlier reporting on the incorporation initiative, see the December 8, 2022 *Pensacola News Journal* article “Group looks to launch incorporation effort for Perdido Key area” by Jim Little at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/escambia-county/2022/12/08/perdido-key-residents-launching-effort-to-incorporate-as-new-city/69703179007/>.

Perdido Bay Boat Ramp Approved

The Escambia County Board of County Commissioners approved a \$4.2 million contract to build a new boat ramp on Perdido Bay. With access from Lillian Highway, the ramp will be funded through the RESTORE Act (BP penalty funds), National Resources Damage Assessment funds and Escambia County's American Rescue Plan Act funds. The new facility will feature 62 parking spaces for vehicles with boat trailers and 22 standard parking spaces. For more on the issue, see the January 16, 2023 *Pensacola News Journal* article "Long-awaited Perdido Bay boat ramp finally gets green light" by Jim Little at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/escambia-county/2023/01/16/perdido-bay-boat-ramp-in-escambia-county-approved/69798195007/>.

Area Mardi Gras Events

Several Mardi Gras events are listed in this month's Key Notes calendar section, but more comprehensive coverage is available in the January 16, 2023 *Pensacola News Journal* article "Pensacola Mardi Gras 2023: How to get the full Mardi Gras experience" by Brandon Girod at <https://news.yahoo.com/pensacola-mardi-gras-2023-full-100809709.html> and the January 27, 2023 *Mullet Wrapper* article "Local Mardi Gras Parade Schedule" (including Mobile parades) at <https://mulletwrapper.net/local-mardi-gras-parade-schedule-2/>.

Record Tourism Year for Pensacola Area

Visit Pensacola reported more than 2.5 million visitors came to Pensacola between October 2021 and September 2022, spent more than \$1.3 billion and provided \$21.8 million for Escambia County's Tourist Development Tax – a 23.5% increase in revenue. For more on recent tourism, including why recent increases may not continue, see the January 11, 2023 *Pensacola News Journal* article "Pensacola had another record tourism year. Here's why that growth may be unsustainable" by Jim Little at <https://www.yahoo.com/now/pensacola-had-another-record-tourism-100801577.html#:~:text=about%20long%20term.%22-.Pensacola's%20tourism%20industry%20had%20another%20record%2Dsetting%20year%20during%202022,impact%20of%20tourism%20for%202022.>

Warrington Middle School

Progress continues toward transitioning Warrington Middle School to a charter school, a move made necessary by repeated low scores in state evaluations. If current expectations are sustained, Charter Schools USA will have a new agreement with the Escambia County School Board by the beginning of the July 1, 2023 school year. The grades to be taught at the school and geographic area from which students will be drawn are among important decisions yet to be made. Current teachers at Warrington Middle School can be reassigned within the district and may also apply for positions with the charter institution but would forfeit their district employment. For more on this issue, see the January 13, 2023 *Pensacola News Journal* article "ECPS board meets state deadline for Warrington Middle with Charter Schools USA partnership" by Brittany Misencik at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/education/2023/01/13/escambia-school-board-meets-state-deadline-for-warrington-charter/69801866007/>.

More on Fish Farms

As presented in an earlier Key Notes, an industrial-scale fish farm in the Gulf of Mexico is being proposed for the Pensacola area. In a memorandum from Christian Wagley of Healthy Coast: “A New York company has applied for permits to setup an industrial-scale fish farm about 25 miles offshore from Perdido Key that would raise over 5 million pounds of fish annually. Fish farms similar to this one have caused pollution and harm to wild fish in many areas around the world.” A fish farm proposed near Siesta Key and Sarasota has been opposed by government and non-governmental groups and is currently being challenged in court. Additional information can be found at <https://healthygulf.org/2022/08/18/a-new-threat-for-the-gulf-industrial-finish-farms/>. For earlier reporting on the issue, see the July 20, 2022 *Pensacola News Journal* article “Pensacola may get one of Florida’s first offshore fish farms, and some are already worried” by Colin Warren-Hicks at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/2022/07/20/manna-fish-farms-seeking-open-gulf-mexico-farm-near-pensacola/10051025002/>.

Oyster Harvesting Limited

Because of rising bacteria levels and associated contamination, in mid-January 2023 Florida’s Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services extended the areas of “Pensacola, Escambia, Blackwater Bay and adjacent East Bay where farming and harvesting oysters was prohibited.” Christian Wagley of Healthy Gulf noted that he and others have “pushed local officials for quick action to find the cause of the increase in bacterial contamination and solutions that will eventually allow these areas to reopen to harvest.” For more on the issue, see the January 17, 2023 *Pensacola News Journal* article “New maps greatly reduce boundaries of Pensacola Bay system oyster harvesting” by Tom McLaughlin at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/2023/01/17/oyster-harvesting-curtailed-in-northwest-florida-waters-as-of-jan-18/69806668007/>.

February Calendar

Feb 02 – Perdido Key Area Chamber Snowbird Hootenanny at the Flora-Bama
Feb 04 – Perdido Key’s Pirates of Lost Treasure Ole River Flotilla boat parade
Feb 04 – Senior Bowl, Hancock Stadium, Mobile
Feb 04 – Pensacola Double Bridge Run
Feb 10 – Ballet Pensacola’s Military Appreciation Night
Feb 10,11,19 – Pensacola Ice Flyers at Pensacola Bay Center
Feb 11 – Mardi Gras Krewe du Kidz Parade at OWA
Feb 11 – Super Chili Cookoff at the Flora-Bama
Feb 14 – Valentine’s Day, various restaurant/lounge activities
Feb 16 – Original Snowbird Hootenanny at the Flora-Bama
Feb 17&18 – Mardi Gras parades downtown Pensacola
Feb 19 – Mardi Gras parade Pensacola Beach
Feb 18 – OWA Mardi Gras parade
Feb 18 – Paradise Festival Music Festival Fort Walton Beach
Feb 20 – Moon Pies on Main at The Wharf
Feb 21 – Mardi Gras Day with parades in Gulf Shores and Orange Beach
Feb 24,25,26 – Pensacon at the Pensacola Bay Center
Feb 25 – Pensacola Habitat Food Truck Festival
Feb 28 – Sun Belt Basketball Championship Games

The following websites provide additional information about events in our great Gulf Coast region:

<http://www.visitperdido.com/>

<http://mygulfcoastchamber.com/>

<http://mulletwrapper.net/>

<https://myescambia.com/>

<http://www.emeraldcoastfl.com//>

<http://alabama.travel/festivals-and-events>

Perdido Key Association Board of Directors